



CITY OF GAITHERSBURG  
MINUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

February 10, 2004  
7:00-9:00 p.m.

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A meeting of the Environmental Affairs Committee was held at 7:00 p.m. at City Hall. Committee members present: Nina Baird, Ken Gemmell, Matt Hopkins, Rachel Hopp, John Hudson, Toni Hudson, and Jim Simpson. Staff present: Environmental Specialist Erica Shingara and Administrative Liaison Meredith Strider.

I. Call to Order.

The meeting was called to order at 7:09 p.m.

II. Approval of Minutes.

Approved the Minutes of the January 13, 2004 meeting.

III. City Environmental Update.

The Sensitive Areas Element of the Master is now called the "Environment Element." A new draft was distributed to the Committee to review and provide comments at the next meeting.

The Environmental Affairs Committee website has been updated to include the mission statement and goals.

The minutes will be posted as pdf files.

The City's web developer is working on the Youth Environmental Stewardship pages.

Marriott at Washingtonian collected the green building checklist and information, although their project is 70% designed.

A possible recycling video with Forest Oak Middle School students is in the works, and will hopefully be completed in time for Environmental Awareness Week. It will focus on residential aspects, and what people can do around their own houses.

The record on the smoking issue will be held open until February 25<sup>th</sup> at 5 p.m.; a vote will likely occur on March 1, 2004.

The Mayor and City Council will adopt the Strategic Directions on March 1, 2004.

A public hearing is scheduled for June 7, 2004 to discuss the Environment Element of the Master Plan.

The City Manager has authorized the Department of Public Works to investigate using the electric/gas hybrids for City sedan replacements.

IV. Restaurant and Bar Smoking Ban.

The Committee does not believe there is enough support for a full ban. It appears that small businesses and workers support option 3, which is the modified Howard County ban that requires separate ventilation systems. The Committee expressed concern over option 3 because it can be very costly for some businesses to install ventilation systems, there may be enforcement difficulties, and there is not evidence that ventilation is fully effective.

More research is needed on compliance issues and to find evidence that ventilation doesn't effectively rid the air of toxins from second hand smoke.

Rachel Hopp stated that the Smoke-Free Maryland website has information regarding ventilation and smoking

establishments.

Since there is not enough time to draft a Committee letter to address these issues, Committee members can submit any findings individually.

Action item: John and Toni Hudson will research information from different organizations' studies on compliance and ventilation and submit information to the City.

V. Environmental Awareness Week.

There will be activities at the Youth Center all week.

Forest Oak and Gaithersburg Middle Schools are interested in a Green Building activity but want to know if there is a developed curriculum.

Matt Hopkins and Nina Baird distributed program materials printed from the web. Roofus' Solar home on DOE's website is an interactive page and great resource with tips for kids: <http://www.eere.energy.gov/roofus/>.

There are handouts of good habits and money saving tips that can be made into boards for classrooms to post. Teachers could possibly teach the lessons themselves with this information or the City/Committee could be guest speakers. Lesson plans can be posted online as a resource for teachers. They will include information on time and materials needed, grade level, etc.

These lessons can be presented to a 30-person class in multiple sessions (four 1-hour sessions).

We can create programs on recycling, toxic cleaners, and other constructive practices around the house.

Possibly do a program on insulation and the significance of R values, and a program on lighting where kids can look at classroom fixtures as examples. Kids can take this information home with them and put it to use.

Action item: Erica will talk to Amy Pike and Jay Foster at the middle schools to start these programs.

VI. Local Air Quality.

Public Works is looking at electric/gas hybrids, such as the Toyota Prius, as a replacement for City sedans.

Preliminary grant research indicates that to receive grants for these vehicles, education & community involvement are often required as well as an estimation of air quality benefits.

Action Item: Committee members will research grant opportunities to purchase hybrid vehicles.

Rachel Hopp presented information and a potential plan of action for a local air quality program

The Committee reviewed EPA information on existing air quality conditions and pollutants sources. There does not appear to be a major industry here that accounts for the majority of emissions. We have 202 stationary sources regulated for air quality and only 23 for water quality. For example, there are dry cleaners, printers, furniture shops/refinishers, gas stations, body shops that all handle toxic chemicals & emit harmful VOCs.

Discussed policies/programs options:

- o Some businesses sell emission reductions to other businesses that need the offsets to stay in compliance.
- o LUTRAQ in Portland was able to make a difference by deciding they wanted to get away from a driving-based community, and make things more pedestrian-friendly. They were able to stop a major freeway from being constructed.
- o One way for better transportation is to encourage converting commercial and private fleets to alternative fuel vehicles.
- o Educate, not regulate. By creating education and awareness programs, people can learn about not using gas lawnmowers, grills, scooters, leaf blowers, etc.
- o Examine Federal funding opportunities.

The Committee is interested in pursuing this program and suggested a plan of action that is similar to the development of a green building program: gather information; investigate funding opportunities and budget needs; obtain Council support; develop practical, low-cost options, etc..

Action Item: The Committee should review the air quality section of the Environment Element of the Master Plan and continue to research programs and policies implemented by other small cities to address this issue.

Action Item: Rachel Hopp and Erica Shingara will look into inviting a guest speaker to educate the Committee on Air Quality issues.

VII. Green Building.

Action Item: Matt Hopkins will review and modify the Green Building Program's technical information as time permits.

Monument Corporation submitted a LEED checklist; however, it is unlikely the project will meet certification requirements.

Montgomery County is considering a green building program, possibly to be modeled after Arlington County. It will look at renovation of existing buildings, as well as new development. The County received input from the Sierra Club and other organizations at their bonus density workshop.

Rockville is working on a Green Homes residential program, similar to the Earth Craft project.

A potential tenant at the Thomas Cannery expressed interest in pursuing green building.

VIII. Youth Environmental Stewardship Program.

The youth program information was given to the web developer to include on the City's web pages. Future and past projects will be posted on the website. This will allow us to recognize projects, increase awareness, and provide a resource to schools and organizations that lists project opportunities.

Jim Simpson spoke with Council Member Henry Marraffa about the program and he expressed interest in the awards, and may provide support for the program and for obtaining patches.

Action item: Jim Simpson, who is also on the Education Committee, will speak with the Education Committee to determine if they are interested in coordinating efforts.

IX. New business.

Date for strawbale house tour: Sunday February 22, 2004. Everyone will meet onsite at 2 p.m. Matt Hopkins will accompany to provide technical insight.

Action Item: Toni & John Hudson will email a map with directions.

Action Item: Eric Shingara will invite the Mayor and City Council.

X. Next meeting.

Date: Tuesday, March 9 at 7:00 p.m.

Comments on the Environment Element should be ready.

Agenda items: Local Air Quality, Master Plan Environment Element, Smoking Ban, Green Building Progress

XI. Adjourned at 9:15 p.m.